



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Krieger, Communications – (401) 222-8471
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R.I. to Award Diplomas that Honor Significant Student Achievement Students to Have Multiple Opportunities to Succeed on State Assessments

NARRAGANSETT – Under the new diploma system that the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education approved tonight for public hearing (January 6, 2011), Rhode Island will award Honors and Regents Diplomas to students who achieve at high levels.

Under the new diploma system, students scoring below partially proficient on the grade 11 state assessments must take the assessments again in grade 12; students who show sufficient improvement in grade 12 can meet the graduation requirement for state assessments.

The Regents will vote on the regulations for final approval at their March meeting following the public hearings.

“The diploma system that the Regents approved tonight will ensure that all students have the support they need to meet the high standards we have set for graduation,” said Regents Chairman Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq. “Too often, we focus on the minimum level of achievement required for graduation. The new diploma system offers students multiple opportunities to succeed and honors students who attain the highest levels of achievement.”

“The new diploma system will ensure that our graduates can demonstrate proficiency through their coursework, on state assessments, and through senior projects or electronic portfolios of their work,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “With its focus on achievement and on student growth, the new diploma system maintains a high standard for graduation for all students, it will inspire and encourage our students to do their best work throughout their years of high school, and it will require schools and districts to support all students and prepare them for success in colleges, careers, and life.”

The new diploma system:

- **Maintains a high standard for graduation.** The new diploma system recognizes different levels of achievement so as to inspire students to do their best work, and sets a minimum statewide achievement level for graduation.
- **Honors students who achieve at high levels.** Awarding Honors or Regents Diplomas will not diminish the value of a Rhode Island Diploma. About 30 states at present have multi-tiered diploma systems, and most colleges offer honors or “cum laude” distinction without diminishing the value of the college degree.

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Telephone 401-222-4600 **Fax** 401-222-6178 **TTY** 800-745-5555 **Voice** 800-745-6575

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sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race, religion, national origin, or disability

- **Inspires all students to do their best work.** No student will be “assigned” a pathway based on academic rigor. All students will be encouraged to pursue the highest level of achievement.
- **Recognizes all aspects of student achievement, including performance on state assessments.** Students will have to meet the standard on all three aspects of the graduation requirements: state assessments, coursework, and performance-based assessments.
- **Clarifies what happens for students who do not score “partially proficient” in grade 11.** These students will take the state assessment again in grade 12 and will meet graduation requirements only if they show sufficient growth, complete their required coursework, and demonstrate proficiency through senior projects or electronic portfolios.

Under the *current* diploma system, all students (beginning with the Class of 2012) must attain a minimum level of achievement, including a score of “partially proficient” on the state assessments, which students take in their junior year. Students who do not score partially proficient may demonstrate proficiency on assessments in another manner that has not been specified. Current regulations also state that assessment results alone cannot bar a student from graduation.

Under the *new* diploma system, schools and districts must provide additional support and instruction to students who fall below this minimum score of partially proficient, and the students must take the state assessment again in their senior year. Students who show sufficient improvement can meet the graduation requirement, even though some may still fall below the level of partially proficient. The Regents were especially mindful of students with disabilities and of English-language learners when they adopted this provision.

The Regents approved for public comment the new diploma system – revisions to the Secondary School Regulations of 2008 – at their meeting, held at Narragansett High School. The revised regulations will go out for public hearing later this month, after which the Regents will vote on the regulations for final approval.

The Regents have scheduled public hearings on:

Tuesday, January 18 @ 5 p.m., at CCRI Flanagan Campus, 1762 Louisquisset Pike, Lincoln
 Wednesday, January 19 @ 5 p.m., at South Kingstown High School, 215 Columbia St.
 Tuesday, January 25 @ 5 p.m., at Providence Career & Technical Academy, 91 Fricker St.

Tomorrow (Friday, January 7), RIDE will post the revised regulations and a set FAQs about the diploma system on the RIDE Web site:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Regents/Regentsregulations.aspx>

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